

## Mary's Message

Happy New Year! I hope that you had a wonderful holiday season. January always brings up thoughts of New Year's resolutions. Newspapers, TV shows, and magazines are full of ideas on how to get rid of clutter, lose those holiday pounds, or begin exercising. We start off with enthusiasm, but gradually give up. Perhaps we've tried to change too much and it's overwhelming. Life tends to get in the way, and it's easy to put off that resolution "until tomorrow."

How many times have you put "begin exercise program" on your list of resolutions? Exercising is hard enough for most people, but for those of us with fibromyalgia, it can seem impossible. It hurts for us to move before exercising, during, and afterwards. Who in their right mind would want to put their body through contortions? It's so much easier just to sit on the couch or stay in bed feeling miserable.

If you are tired of feeling miserable and want to do something positive to help yourself, put "begin exercise program" back on your resolution list. FMAH has just the thing to help you. We have produced our very own *Strength through Movement* DVD! Starring FMAH volunteers with fibromyalgia, the video shows how to incorporate simple stretches throughout your day. Beginning in the morning with easy exercises in bed and moving into the kitchen or bath, you can do stretches that will increase your flexibility. It's amazing how much better you'll feel.

The video is perfect for all, from beginners to the more advanced. It tells you how to make the exercise easier or harder, depending upon your own level of fitness. Professionally produced, with fitness expert Leslee Cross, M.A. narrating the video, the DVD is a bargain at \$15. See the order form on page 11.

Take care,  
Mary Harper  
President

## Conference a Huge Success

By Mary Harper

On a beautiful Saturday morning, more than 225 patients, families, and health care professionals gathered at the Hornberger Conference Center to hear four renowned speakers shed new light on fibromyalgia. The theme of the conference, "Piecing Together a World with Hope," was evident from the topics of the speakers to the table decorations. Based upon our logo, which incorporates the words *research*, *education*, *vision*, and *support* depicted on puzzle pieces fitting together, the conference included speakers discussing research, their vision for the future of FM, educating us about our complex bodies, and providing support through hope for a better life.

Daniel Kirsch, Ph.D., of Mineral Wells, Texas, began the conference by explaining Cranial Electrotherapy Stimulation (CES). Dr. Kirsch has invented a small device called Alpha-Stim that stimulates brain waves to help treat pain, anxiety, and depression. He told how it works

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Fibromyalgia Association of Houston

## the FIBROMYALGIA Connection

The *Fibromyalgia Connection* is published three times a year by The Fibromyalgia Association of Houston, Inc. (FMAH), a 501(c)(3) charity, and its volunteers.

Materials and opinions presented in the newsletter are for information only and do not necessarily reflect the views of FMAH, its officers, directors, or medical advisory board. Fibromyalgia (FM) patients should consult their physicians or other health care professionals for diagnosis and prior to initiating any form of treatment or exercise.

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Visit FMAH online at [www.fmah.org](http://www.fmah.org).

For more information about fibromyalgia, call the FMAH Information Line at 713-664-0180. A volunteer will return your call.

# Support Group Meeting Schedule

We meet at St. Luke's United Methodist Church and greatly appreciate the space they provide for our meetings; however, FMAH is not affiliated with any church. Companions are always welcome.

All meetings are free and open to the public. FMAH reserves the right to substitute speakers if necessary, so for more current information, please call the FMAH Information Line,

713-664-0180, or visit us online at [www.fmah.org](http://www.fmah.org). Parking is free in the church lot.

### LOCATION:

St. Luke's United Methodist Church  
3471 Westheimer (just inside the 610 Loop)

### ROOM:

Parlor B, on the Westheimer side of the church

### TIME:

6:30 p.m. New members, please come 15 minutes early to register.

### January 23

Todd Swick, M.D.

Sleep Disorders and FM

### February 27

Roberta Diddel, Ph.D.

Successful Strategies for Relationships

### March 27

Leslee Cross, M.S.

Get Moving!

### April 24

TBA



### January: Sleep Disorders

Almost all FM patients have problems sleeping. Whether it's waking up feeling as though you've been hit by a Macktruck, or difficulty falling asleep, nighttime is often miserable for us. There are several sleep disorders that can cause problems. Once diagnosed and treated, it's remarkable what a difference it can make in the symptoms of FM. Many FM patients have sleep apnea, which can be dangerous if not treated. Come and learn about sleep disorders from the Medical Director of The Houston Sleep Center, Todd Swick, MD. We'll meet in our usual room, Parlor B, at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, January 23.

### February: Successful Strategies for Relationships

Since Valentine's Day is in February, it seems appropriate to focus on our relationships this month. Remember that relationships can mean how we relate to *anyone*, not just our spouse or partner. When we are busy struggling with fatigue or pain, it's easy to forget that those around us are suffering, too. Bring your family, friend, or spouse to a very interesting and eye-opening talk. Roberta Diddel, PhD, is a psychologist in private practice that specializes in chronic illness and disability. Come and learn with us on February 27, 6:30 pm.

### March: Let's Move!

Stop groaning. Moving can be fun, and it definitely helps you to feel better. FMAH volunteers have produced our own movement video, *Strength Through Movement*. The video shows easy-to-do stretches that you can do all during your day. Exercise specialist Leslee Cross, M.S., who consulted on the script and narrated the video, will speak to

us about safe ways to begin exercising. She'll lead us in some easy stretches, so wear comfortable clothing. Please join us March 27 at 6:30 p.m. in Parlor B.

### April: To Be Announced

To find out the speaker for April, please call the Information Line at 713-664-0180 or check the Web site at [www.fmah.org](http://www.fmah.org).

## A Note from Gayle Moses

During our conference I was presented two lovely gifts. I would like to thank Mary Harper for the plaque now hanging on the wall in my office/sewing room (although not much sewing goes on there any more), and our great volunteers for the beautiful bracelet which I wear with much pride.

It has been an honor to serve this organization and a privilege to work with our dedicated volunteers who have

made FMAH a lifeline for so many. FMAH has been there for me through rough times with my health and through personal crises, and I will "pass this forward" as long as I am able and needed. Thanks again everyone!

**Editor's note: Gayle serves FMAH on the board of directors and secretary/treasurer and was instrumental in planning the conference.**



### Fibromyalgia Association of Houston

Phone: Information Line: 713-664-0180

E-mail: [FMAHouston@yahoo.com](mailto:FMAHouston@yahoo.com)

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and cited numerous studies that show its effectiveness for a variety of conditions, including fibromyalgia.

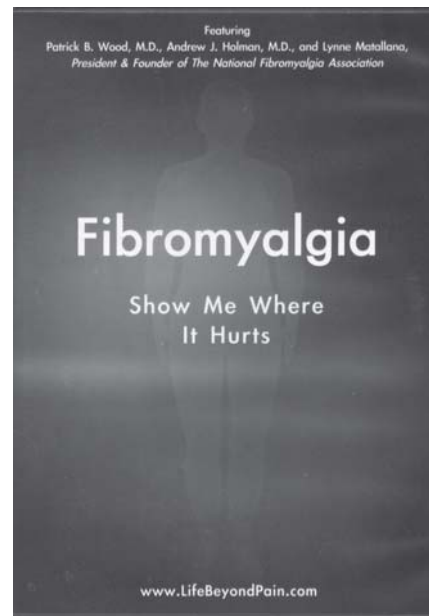
After Dr. Kirsch's stimulating talk, the video *Show Me Where It Hurts* made its Houston premiere. Produced by Storme Wood (brother of our keynote speaker, Patrick Wood, M.D.), the video interviewed Dr. Wood, who explained how new brain imaging technologies have changed the way we view FM. The film also introduced patients who discussed their own challenges and how they cope with a chronic illness.

The video was a perfect introduction to fibromyalgia and Dr. Wood's talk on "Fibromyalgia: A New Day Begins...." Dr. Wood is currently doing research at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center in Shreveport, Louisiana. He is an excellent speaker, taking complicated biochemical research and making it something that we could all understand. He stated his hypothesis that "a stress-induced disruption of normal dopamine release results in the development of chronic widespread pain." This is groundbreaking research and could lead to new treatments for FM.

After a tasty lunch catered by the Charleston Tea Room of Friendswood, the attendees were treated to a clip of our own FMAH video, *Strength through*

*Movement*. Starring local volunteers, the video shows very simple stretches and exercises that you can do easily throughout the day.

Having a chronic illness makes it difficult to cope, and sometimes a person feels helpless and hopeless. As President of the National Fibromyalgia Associa-



**Show Me Where It Hurts DVD is available through the FMAH store for \$31.**

tion and an FM sufferer, Lynne Matallana knows only too well the challenges that we face. Lynne, from Orange, California, gave us reassurance that our feelings are normal, and then discussed specific things to try. For example, Lynne stressed the importance of building a support system. She said that joining a support group is an excellent way to meet others who understand and can offer ideas for coping.

The last speaker helped us to work out the kinks after sitting through the long day. Leslee Cross, M.S., is an experienced fitness expert with a master's degree in exercise science. Leslee consulted on our new movement DVD, and is very aware of the challenges that FM patients face. She led us through some simple stretches while sitting and standing and encouraged us to keep moving.

Our medical director, Richard Rubin, M.D., served as master of ceremonies and did a great job. He joined with Drs. Wood and Kirsch to host the question-and-answer sections, and also helped to keep the conference running on schedule. A special thank you to Linda Horton, who as conference chair was so busy all day that she never got to hear any of the speakers. Linda is our director of public relations, and when she wasn't on the phone dealing with the many details of planning the conference, she was sending out publicity for both the conference and our regular meetings. Gayle Moses ran the FMAH booth, and also took care of ticket sales and registration. She is secretary/treasurer of FMAH and did those duties in addition to the conference chores. Linda and Gayle both had numerous health and personal challenges this past year, yet both worked extremely hard to make the conference such a success.

Besides the speakers, attendees were treated to the “FM Marketplace.” Over 40 vendors were there, selling all manner of supplements, beds, books, shoes, microwavable pillows, jewelry and devices to relieve pain. Other organizations provided information on their programs, including the Social Security Administration, the Student Occupational Therapy Association from Tomball College, and the Houston Celiac Support Group. For a full list of vendors, please see pages 8 and 9.

We also had a very successful silent auction, thanks to the hard work of dedicated volunteers such as Donna Gatewood, Chair; Linda Wawee; Kristi DeRubeis; and many others. We had a wonderful variety of items for bid; everything from original art to a signed Lance Berkman baseball to a glider flight was auctioned off. The same volunteers also were instrumental in getting merchants to donate fabulous door prizes. We wanted to make sure that those who couldn’t afford to bid on the Silent Auction would have a chance to win a prize. Everyone went home with goodie bags decorated with the FMAH logo and the bags’ two sponsors’ logos, ALCis and Curves.

This was the first time that we’ve held a conference of this magnitude. We are all volunteers working out of our homes, driving long distances to meet-

The FIBROMYALGIA Connection

ings, and spending hours on the phones. We held our breath, and prayed for good weather and for lots of people to show up. The conference evaluations were very complimentary. Even Dr. Wood in his newsletter, *Life Beyond Pain*, stated that we “had an excellent patient conference.” We know that there are things to work on if we decide to do another one, and we appreciate all who took the time to write evaluations.

The conference is now available on a two-DVD set for a New Year’s special of only \$15. It includes all the speakers and their question-and-answer sessions. We also have available Dr. Wood’s outstanding DVD, *Show Me Where it Hurts*. Don’t forget FMAH’s exercise video, *Strength through Movement*. All DVDs are available on page 11 of this newsletter, or on our Web site, [www.fmah.org](http://www.fmah.org). These are perfect gifts for yourself, family, or even your doctor. Support yourself and FMAH. Buy all three today!

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## Donors

The following generous donors contributed by check. Unfortunately, there is no way to acknowledge those who made cash contributions, but we do appreciate every donation you give us.

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The following list includes individuals who generously donated conference scholarships to people who would otherwise be unable to attend.

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# Q&A with Dr. Wood

Dr. Patrick B. Wood is a respected authority on the cause and treatment of fibromyalgia syndrome whose areas of research interests include fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome and behavioral medicine in primary care.

He currently serves as an assistant professor in the Department of Family Medicine and Comprehensive Care at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center in Shreveport, Louisiana, where he directs both the Fibromyalgia Research Program and the Fibromyalgia Care Clinic. He was a Visiting Scholar at the world-renowned Centre for Research on Pain at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, and also serves as chief medical advisor for Angler Biomedical Technologies, LLC.

If you missed the conference, you can still order the DVD. See the order form on page 11.

**1. What is the difference between serotonin and dopamine? Until now, the lack of serotonin has been blamed for FM.**

Both serotonin and dopamine are important brain neurotransmitters that are involved in a number of functions that may contribute to FM symptoms, including pain, fatigue, mood, motivation, and anxiety. While



**Dr. Patrick Wood presented “Fibromyalgia: A New Day Begins...” at the FMAH *Bringing Together a World with Hope* conference in September 2006. Currently, he is conducting research at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center in Shreveport, Louisiana.**

brain serotonin has been shown to be involved in depression and anxiety, drugs that primarily affect serotonin have shown very little effectiveness in alleviating pain.

Dopamine is also thought to play a key role in mood, but also (importantly) it is the key brain chemical involved in pain modulation. Thus, the lack of dopamine that we have demonstrated with positron emission tomogra-

phy makes sense of the variety of symptoms that go along with FM.

**2. Please give us your best guess – how long until this research could be applied to an available treatment that could be prescribed by our physicians?**

Several large pharmaceutical companies are investigating the potential for dopamine-related drugs to treat FM. Unfortunately, these types of studies are expensive and usually take several years

to complete, so I anticipate it may take up to three plus years for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to grant them approval for use in FM. On the other hand, for those patients with forward-looking care providers, there are drugs that are currently available that impact dopamine function that may be effective if given a therapeutic trial.

### **3. Are you saying that stress is a cause of FM?**

I believe that a combination of factors contribute to the development of chronic widespread pain, including genetic susceptibility and environmental exposures, which typically involves stressful experience. Chronic stress produces measurable, predictable changes in the manner in which the brain and endocrine system work. The important thing to bear in mind is that “stress” in the physiological sense refers to a wide variety of conditions beyond psychosocial stressors.

### **4. Are dopamine levels naturally up and down? If so, is that why symptoms cycle or cause different symptoms at different times?**

There is some natural variation in dopamine levels, depending on the individual’s circumstances. Dopamine synthesis and release responds dynamically to environmental factors, so if a person is doing well but then undergoes significant stress beyond what is normal, chances  
The FIBROMYALGIA Connection

are that will affect their ability to make and release dopamine, thereby impacting severity of symptoms.

### **5. How do you up the levels of dopamine? Does lack of dopamine affect lack of patience and/or sensitivity to noises?**

There are many strategies to increase dopamine levels. One way is to give the brain the “fuel” it needs to make more. I frequently recommend my patients take an amino acid supplement called DLPA (dl-phenylalanine), which the brain uses to make dopamine. Other strategies include using drugs that promote its release, allow it to last longer, or mimic its activity (e.g. Mirapex or Requip). Other strategies involve using medications to

block the impact of stress on the brain, thereby allowing it to function better and make dopamine more naturally. *Please be sure to discuss with your health care provider before making any changes to your treatment regimen, including starting any supplements.*

### **6. Why not test on humans instead of rats? Their bodies are not like mine.**

The unfortunate reality is that many of the studies that are necessary to reveal the mechanism of disease ultimately involve sacrifice of the animal being tested. Obviously, it would not be acceptable or desirable to sacrifice human subjects. The remarkable thing about all mammals is the striking overlap between their physiologies.

## **FMAH Honors Deanne Brown**



**President Mary Harper, left, presents retiring Director Deanne Brown with a plaque at the October meeting. Deanne completed eight years of service to FMAH, with six years as treasurer.**

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Relax the Back  
Sleep Garden  
The Chi Ladies  
Unker's Medicated Salve & Spray  
Z-Coil Pain Relief Footwear

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Arbonne International  
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## New exercise DVD encourages you to find strength through movement

By Sheshe Giddens

Stiff muscles? Tired? Pain all over? The solution may not be what you think; it's to get moving. For this reason, FMAH has developed a DVD featuring actual FM patients titled *Strength through Movement*, with the assistance of exercise therapist Leslee Cross, who narrated the video and choreographed the exercises.

A person with fibromyalgia may find the advice to get some exercise counterintuitive to the way they feel. But according to Cross, exercise is just what a person with FM needs. "When you strengthen a muscle, it enables you to work more and do more. It gives you more energy, and people with fibromyalgia need every gain they can get," said Cross. The *Strength through Movement* DVD is available for \$15.



**FMAH's video used actual Fibromyalgia patients to demonstrate how to safely get moving. Pictured left to right: Gayle Moses, Hue Martell, Leslee Cross, Sheshe Giddens, Janet Gingell and Mary Harper (seated).**

# The FMAH Store

All information is presented for informational purposes only and reflects the views of the authors.

## BOOKS

***The Art of Body Maintenance: Winners' Guide to Pain Relief***, by Hal Blatman, M.D. and Berad Ekvall, B.F.A.

Use this guide to better understand your body and manage your pain. Includes exercise ball.

***The FM Help Book***, by Jenny Fransen, R.N., and I. Jon Russell, M.D., Ph.D. Provides many practical ways to cope with FM, including how to improve sleep, develop an exercise program, and manage flare-ups. Excellent resource for patients and professionals.

***The Complete Idiot's Guide to Fibromyalgia***, by Lynne Matallana with Laurence Bradley, Ph.D.; Stuart Silverman, M.D.; and Muhammad Yunus, M.D. This book will show you how to create a plan to combat symptoms, work with health care professionals, and garner support from family and friends. The author was a featured speaker at our September conference.

## DVDS **\*\*NEW LOW PRICES! AVAILABLE IN DVD FORMAT ONLY\*\***

***Strength through Movement*** – Get moving with FMAH's latest movement video featuring real fibromyalgia patients. This DVD focuses on increasing flexibility and relaxation while reducing stress. Narrated by fitness professional Leslee A. Cross, M.S., this video will get you moving!

***"Piecing Together a World with Hope" FMAH Conference September 30, 2006*** – New low price! Two-DVD set with four fascinating speakers. Learn the latest research and coping techniques. Perfect for yourself, family members, even your doctors.

***Show Me Where It Hurts*** – Features two of our conference speakers, Patrick Wood, M.D. and Lynne Matallana, President of the National Fibromyalgia Association. Discusses cutting-edge research and interviews patients who tell their stories. A great introduction to fibromyalgia, it will help friends and families to understand what you're going through.

***Weird Celiac Disease – It Could Be You***, Janet Rinehart, Chairman of the Houston Celiac Support Group, January 2006. Many FM patients have irritable bowel syndrome, but could it really be celiac sprue disease?

***Loving and Caring for Yourself***, Mary Jo Rapini, L.P.C. Living with a chronic illness affects your sexuality, relationships, and how you view yourself. Mary Jo's frankness and sense of humor will keep you laughing as you learn new ways of thinking about yourself.

***Advances in TMJ Treatment***, Charles Hoopingarner, D.D.S. Many FM patients also have jaw pain. Find out how it can be treated with the latest technologies.

***Fibro-What? A Hypnosis Approach***, Michael Schuman, C.Ht. Schuman has a special interest in medical hypnotherapy. Learn how hypnosis works and how it can help relieve your pain.

***Changes in Social Security Disability***, Robert Hardy, Attorney, June 2006. Hardy is an expert in Social Security Disability law. He explains the current procedure for applying for disability and also discusses upcoming changes.

## MISCELLANEOUS

**Lapel Pin.** Our logo is now a lapel pin. In full color, it reads "Piecing Together a World With Hope" and shows the puzzle pieces of research, education, support, and vision. It's a great way to spread the word about FMAH and fibromyalgia.

**Free Kroger Card.** Do you shop at Kroger? Each time you check out, hand your Kroger Share Card to the cashier and we'll receive a donation of 1% of your purchase. Send us an SASE, and we'll be happy to send you as many as you need.

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	Quantity	Price	Total
<b>BOOKS:</b>			
<i>The Art of Body Maintenance: Winners' Guide to Pain Relief</i>	-----	\$32.00	\$-----
<i>The FM Help Book</i>	-----	\$22.00	\$-----
<i>The Complete Idiot's Guide to Fibromyalgia</i>	-----	\$21.00	\$-----
<b>DVDs:</b>			
<i>"Piecing Together a World with Hope"</i>	-----	\$16.00	\$-----
<i>FMAH Conference September 30, 2006</i>			
<i>Strength through Movement</i>	-----	\$17.00	\$-----
<i>Show Me Where It Hurts</i>	-----	\$31.00	\$-----
<i>Weird Celiac Disease-It Could Be You</i>			
<i>Loving and Caring for Yourself</i>	-----	\$6.00	\$-----
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<i>Advances in TMJ Treatment</i>	-----	\$6.00	\$-----
<i>Fibro-What? A Hypnosis Approach</i>	-----	\$6.00	\$-----
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**MISCELLANEOUS:**

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*The Fibromyalgia Connection* ----- \$10.00 \$-----

Free to Texas residents. Out-of-state subscriptions: \$10/three issues.

**FMAH T-Shirts**

Help raise FM awareness! The front of the T-shirt tells who we are, and the back shows the main symptoms of FM. A picture is worth a thousand words, and this T-shirt can help explain FM for you.



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